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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FEBRUARY 24 CALL ON DFM VALYNAKIS:

MACEDONIA NAME, TURKEY, CYPRUS

Classified By: AMB. CHARLES P. RIES FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: At a February 25 introductory meeting with Ambassador, DFM Valynakis said Greece "meant business" in finding a solution to the Macedonia name issue. However, Greek redlines were that the term "Republika Makedonija" had to be modified by a third word and had to remain in Slavic. Saying the time was right to solve this problem, he asked the U.S. to convince the Macedonians to be flexible about what he described as a reasonable Greek compromise. On Greece-Turkish relations, the DFM reiterated Greek support for Turkey's EU vocation, but argued that Turkey still suffered from the "old mentality" of viewing Greece as a principal threat. Valynakis said he was buoyed by the 7 million crossings since the Green Line opened in Cyprus and that he believed the Turks were ready to discuss Greek Cypriot concerns on the Annan Plan. END SUMMARY.

Macedonia Name: Must Have "Third Word" and Remain in Slavic

¶12. (C) At an February 25 meeting with Ambassador, DFM Valynakis said that Greece was "approaching the endgame" regarding its negotiations with Macedonia on the name issue. He stated that progress had been made, that the GoG "meant business" in finding a solution, and that Greece had no interest in using this issue to block Macedonia's EU accession progress. However, he reiterated Greek redlines: there had to be a third word that qualified the term "Republika Makedonija" and the term had to remain in its original Slavic. Valynakis said such a third word qualifier might be "Nova" or "Skopje" that could come respectively before or after the Slavic name, and that Greece would never accept the English term, "Republic of Macedonia." He argued that Greece had shown flexibility, since for years it had refused to even discuss anything that used the term "Republika Makedonija." Now, he maintained, it was Macedonia's turn to show some flexibility.

¶13. (C) Valynakis summed up this Greek position as a reasonable compromise that needed a "final push" to be accepted. In this regard, he asked if the U.S. could convince the Macedonians not to hold out for their maximalist "Republic of Macedonia" position. The Ambassador said the USG shares Greece's interest in resolving this issue, but asked if the Greek proposal would not require a change of Macedonia's constitution - an extremely difficult prospect, at best. Valynakis answered that these negotiations cover the international usage of the name, implying that this would not necessarily require such a change. The DFM stressed that Greece had to take into account the interests of its 2 million Greek Macedonians and added that the GoG was now willing to share the name, but "nobody should have a monopoly on it."

¶14. (C) Asked the current status of the negotiations, Valynakis said that both sides were expecting a new proposal from UN Special Negotiator Nimetz at their next meeting in mid-March. Valynakis seemed a bit concerned that Nimetz might introduce a proposal to the UNSC before fully briefing the two sides and getting their agreement, or that the Macedonians might want to change the framework of the negotiations. The Ambassador answered that this was highly unlikely. On the whole, Valynakis concluded that the time was right for a solution ("the moment of truth has arrived"), pointing to the upcoming avis by the European Commission on Macedonia's EU application. He said he made this point to Macedonian President Crvenkovski during a meeting in Zagreb last week.

Greece-Turkey

¶15. (C) Valynakis said that Greece fully supported Turkey's EU vocation because it wanted to change the still-hostile mentality of its large eastern neighbor. Just today, visiting former Turkish FM Yassar Yakis, heading a parliamentary delegation, had met FM Molyviatis and raised the casus belli declaration of the Turkish parliament some years back, saying Turkey felt it had to react to a potential decision by Greece to extend its territorial waters to 12 nautical miles. Valynakis said Yakis' comments surprised the Greeks because this sort of mentality of regarding Greece as

a principal threat belonged to the past. The DFM was hopeful that as Turkey began its EU accession negotiations it would stop viewing Greece in this way and would commit itself to good neighborly relations. He added that the Turks no longer place Greece on its list of enemies in official doctrine, yet

asked why then does Turkey still plan military operations that are aggressively directed against Greece. As examples, he pointed to Turkish military exercises that deal with the invasion and occupation of the island of Lesvos and the near-daily violations of Greek airspace and FIR regulations.

16. (C) Asked about the on-going Aegean talks with Turkey, Valynakis said that the GoG had purposely kept the same negotiators from the previous government in order not to lose time. However, he admitted that a solution is "not for tomorrow." Valynakis criticized the proposals put forward under former FM Papandreu, saying they were mainly for show and did not deal with the substance of the differences between the two sides.

Cyprus

17. (C) Valynakis said he was buoyed by the nearly 7 million crossings that had been recorded since the Green Line opened. He believed that the Turks are ready to discuss some of the concerns the Greek Cypriots have regarding the Annan Plan and said that GoG policy remains the reunification of the island. One of the biggest Greek Cypriot concerns, he maintained, was that security could not be guaranteed by a country (Turkey) which occupies the island. Asked why the Greek Cypriots are not more specific in what they want changed, Valynakis responded that the Greek Cypriots have been clear in not wanting an up-or-down outcome and or an imposed agreement that does not have the consent of both sides. Valynakis appeared optimistic about an eventual solution, saying Greek and Turkish Cypriots get along and that there is no violence or risk of war.

18. (C) Ambassador asked the GoG to weigh in with Greek Cypriots to moderate their rhetoric over an alleged, recent transfer of sophisticated U.S. military equipment from Turkey to north Cyprus. He added that preliminary indications were that this was a routine shipment that did not appear to be in violation of our arms control legislation regarding transfers to Cyprus. If that proved not to be the case, we would of course be obliged under U.S. law to inform the Turks that they were in violation. In the meantime, Ambassador said it was not helpful for the Cypriot Government to react without knowing the facts. Valynakis said he would look into the matter.

19. (C) COMMENT: Valynakis spent a large part of this meeting talking about the Macedonia name issue and giving the impression that this longtime irritant can be solved in the foreseeable future. Spurred on by our decision to recognize Macedonia's constitutional name and Macedonia's pending EU application, the Greeks have been more active in seeking a compromise. A breakthrough would certainly be welcomed by the international community. However, it is not likely that a compromise -- even one along the lines suggested by Valynakis -- would win big points for the Karamanlis government at home. END COMMENT.
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